

Elite Opponents

The Tarrasque

Creature Incarnations
By Robert Wiese



Welcome to *Elite Opponents: Creature Incarnations*, a column all about monsters -- and strange, variant monsters at that! The **D&D Fight Club** column presents one monster at three different power levels, so that you can insert the appropriate version into your campaign. This column, on the other hand, examines different versions of a given creature for use in different types of campaigns. Though most versions fit best into **D&D** campaigns, one version in this installment is for the **d20 Modern** game, so you can use the creature in your modern-day or future campaigns too.

This installment begins by looking at the biggest (and some say the baddest) creature in the whole **D&D** game -- the tarrasque. While other monsters may have higher challenge ratings, none is as difficult to kill as the tarrasque. But, you may wonder, if the tarrasque is unique, how can any variants exist? Well, it's true that only one tarrasque exists -- one in the **Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting**, one in the **Eberron Campaign Setting**, one in the World of Greyhawk, and one in your campaign world. Thus, the one in your campaign may well be different than the standard version, especially if you have an unusual campaign world.

So this month, we consider some variant tarrasques -- one of which you might find interesting enough to place in your campaign world. Actually trying to kill the tarrasque constitutes an epic adventure (or series of adventures), but legends of this creature permeate the world, and your NPCs should know something about the tarrasque even if they have never seen it.

Variant Tarrasques

Each of the following tarrasques is 70 feet long and 50 feet tall, and it weighs about 130 tons, just like the standard one. None of the templates used here increase its size, and indeed, the tarrasque doesn't need to be any bigger to pack a mean punch.

You might wonder how the tarrasque got an inherited template when only one has ever existed, and it never dies. Well, who says it never dies? No one has ever seen it reproduce, but perhaps it goes dormant and reproduces asexually -- maybe even dying and being reborn anew, like the legendary phoenix. In fact, the hollowed-out body of a long-dead tarrasque could be an interesting adventure site in its own right. But I'll leave the design of that location to you.



Tarrasque of Legend (d20 Modern Game)

I'd like to call this version Godzilla, but any breath weapon it could have according to the rules is pretty short-range compared to the 100-foot radioactive fire breath that the monster used in the movies. But when the tarrasque of legend is standing over Tokyo, I'll bet your players won't quibble much about the length of its breath weapon.

Assigning the monster of legend template from *Monster Manual II* to a unique and legendary creature may seem strange to you -- especially since the template says that the creature has special powers because it was selected by the gods, and the **d20 Modern** game doesn't have gods in the same way that **D&D** does. If you can get past the logistics, however, you'll find that this template still produces an interesting variant with a little extra punch.

Tarrasque of Legend: CR 22; Colossal outsider (native); HD 48d10+816; hp 1,088; Mas 45; Init +10; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 44 (-8 size, +6 Dex, +35 natural, +1 haste), touch 9, flat-footed 38; BAB +48; Grp +86; Atk +63 melee (8d6+22/18-20/x3, bite); Full Atk +63 melee (8d6+22/18-20/x3, 2 bites) and +61 melee (2d8+11, 2 horns) and +61 melee (4d6+11, 2 claws) and +61 melee (6d6+11, tail slap); FS/Reach 30 ft./20 ft.; SQ augmented critical, breath weapon, carapace, damage reduction 15/epic, darkvision 60 ft., frightful presence, greater damage, haste, immunities (ability damage, disease, energy drain, fire, poison), improved grab, low-light vision, regeneration 40, rush, scent, spell resistance 32, swallow whole; AL none; SV Fort +46, Ref +35, Will +24; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 55, Dex 22, Con 45, Int 5, Wis 16, Cha 18.

Skills: Hide -10, Jump +26, Listen +26, Search +10, Spot +26, Survival +15.

Feats: Alertness, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Enlarge Breath, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved InitiativeB, Iron Will, MultiattackB, Power Attack, Toughness (6).

Augmented Critical (Ex): The tarrasque of legend's bite threatens a critical hit on a natural attack roll of 18-20 and deals triple damage on a successful critical hit.

Breath Weapon (Su): Every 1d4+1 rounds, the tarrasque of legend can breathe a 22-foot-long cone of fire that deals 3d6 points of fire damage. A successful DC 51 Reflex save halves the damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Carapace (Ex): The tarrasque's armorlike carapace is so tough and reflective that it can deflect all rays, lines, cones, and even *magic missile* spells. Any such effect has a 30% chance of reflecting back at the caster; otherwise, it is merely negated. Check for reflection before rolling to overcome the creature's spell resistance.

Frightful Presence (Su): The tarrasque can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Each affected creature must succeed on a DC 36 Will save or become shaken, and that condition lasts as long as it remains within 60 feet of the tarrasque. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Greater Damage (Ex): The damage dice for each of the tarrasque of legend's natural attacks increase by one die type.

Haste (Su): The tarrasque of legend always acts as if affected by a *haste* spell (+1 bonus to AC and on attack

rolls, +20 feet of movement, and one extra attack during a full attack sequence).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the tarrasque of legend must hit a Huge or smaller opponent with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Regeneration (Ex): No form of attack deals lethal damage to the tarrasque of legend. It regenerates even if it fails a saving throw against a *disintegrate* spell or a death effect. If the tarrasque fails its save against a spell or effect that would kill it instantly (such as those mentioned above), the spell or effect instead deals nonlethal damage equal to the creature's full normal hit points +10 (or 1,098 hp). The tarrasque of legend is immune to effects that produce incurable or bleeding wounds, such as mummy rot, a sword with the wounding special ability, or a clay golem's cursed wound ability. The tarrasque of legend can be slain only by raising its nonlethal damage total to its full normal hit points +10 (or 1,098 hit points) and using a *wish* or *miracle* spell to keep it dead.

If the tarrasque of legend loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1d6 minutes. (The detached piece dies and decays normally.) The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Rush (Ex): Once per minute, the tarrasque of legend can move at a speed of 180 feet.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The tarrasque of legend can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Huge or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the tarrasque, the opponent takes 2d8+8 points of crushing damage plus 2d8+6 points of acid damage per round from the creature's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 50 points of damage to the tarrasque's digestive tract (AC 25). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The tarrasque of legend's gullet can hold 2 Huge, 8 Large, 32 Medium, 128 Small, or 512 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Skills: The tarrasque of legend has a +8 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

Five-Headed Pyrotarrasque (D&D Game)

Imagine a tarrasque with five heads! Not only would it have five times the biting power, but it could also bring five fiery breath weapons to bear on its opponents! I first tinkered with a thirty-headed version (which the template does allow), but such a creature is really too nasty for its challenge rating, so I don't recommend you make one. Five heads are plenty.

The five-headed pyrotarrasque uses the multiheaded template (pyro version) from *Savage Species*. The end product fits especially well into a campaign world based on Greek mythology, or any one in which hydras are common. It's also logical for a campaign in which wizards frequently create monstrous abominations and leave dangerous magic substances lying around in the woods.

Five-Headed Pyrotarrasque CR 25

Neutral Colossal magical beast (fire)

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +35, Spot +35; darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent

AC 39, touch 5, flat-footed 36; Dodge

hp 1,212 (56 HD); DR 15/epic, regeneration 40, Toughness (6)

Immune ability damage, disease, energy drain, fire, poison

Resist SR 32

Fort +46, **Ref** +33, **Will** +22

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee bite +65 (6d8+17/18-20/x3) or

5 bites +65 (6d8+17/18-20/x3) and

10 horns +65 melee (1d8+10) and

2 claws +65 melee (1d12+8) and

tail slap +65 melee (3d8+8)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Base Atk +56; **Grp** +89

Atk Options augmented critical, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Enlarge Breath, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Multigrab, Power Attack

Special Actions breath weapon (30-ft. cone of fire), frightful presence, improved grab, rush, swallow whole

Abilities Str 45, Dex 16, Con 43, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 14

SQ carapace, greater damage, haste, multiheaded

Feats Alertness, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved MultiattackB, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Multigrab, Power Attack, Toughness (6)

Skills Hide -13, Jump +9, Listen +35, Search +19, Spot +35, Survival +16

Augmented Critical (Ex): The five-headed pyrotarrasque's bite threatens a critical hit on a natural attack roll of 18-20 and deals triple damage on a successful critical hit.

Breath Weapon (Su): Every 1d4 rounds, each of the five-headed pyrotarrasque's heads can breathe a jet of fire 10 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 20 feet long that deals 3d6 points of fire damage. All heads breathe on the same round. A successful DC 28 Reflex save halves the damage.

Carapace (Ex): The five-headed pyrotarrasque's armorlike carapace is so tough and reflective that it can deflect all rays, lines, cones, and even *magic missile* spells. Any such effect has a 30% chance of reflecting back at the caster; otherwise, it is merely negated. Check for reflection before rolling to overcome the creature's spell resistance.

Frightful Presence (Su): The five-headed pyrotarrasque can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Each affected creature must succeed on a DC 40 Will save or become shaken, and that condition lasts as long as it remains within 60 feet of the tarrasque. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the five-headed pyrotarrasque must hit a Huge or smaller opponent with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Multiheaded (Ex): Cutting off one of the five-headed pyrotarrasque's heads does not kill it; all heads must be severed to disable it. The five-headed pyrotarrasque functions normally as long as at least one head remains.

Regeneration (Ex): No form of attack deals lethal damage to the five-headed pyrotarrasque. It regenerates even if it fails a saving throw against a *disintegrate* spell or a death effect. If the tarrasque fails its save against a spell

or effect that would kill it instantly (such as those mentioned above), the spell or effect instead deals nonlethal damage equal to the creature's full normal hit points +10 (or 1,222 hp). The five-headed pyrotarrasque is immune to effects that produce incurable or bleeding wounds, such as mummy rot, a sword with the wounding special ability, or a clay golem's cursed wound ability. The five-headed pyrotarrasque can be slain only by raising its nonlethal damage total to its full normal hit points +10 (or 1,222 hit points) and using a *wish* or *miracle* spell to keep it dead.

If the five-headed pyrotarrasque loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1d6 minutes. (The detached piece dies and decays normally.) The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Rush (Ex): Once per minute, the five-headed pyrotarrasque can move at a speed of 150 feet.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The five-headed pyrotarrasque can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Huge or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the tarrasque, the opponent takes 2d8+8 points of crushing damage plus 2d8+6 points of acid damage per round from the creature's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 50 points of damage to the tarrasque's digestive tract (AC 25). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The five-headed pyrotarrasque's gullet can hold 2 Huge, 8 Large, 32 Medium, 128 Small, or 512 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Skills: The five-headed pyrotarrasque has a +8 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

Spellwarped Woodling Tarrasque (D&D Game)

Our last tarrasque uses the spellwarped and woodling templates from *Monster Manual III*. This version is ideally suited for a forested world, since it is actually part plant. Because of its plantlike nature and appearance, this tarrasque could live deep in the woods, perhaps resembling an ancient tree when dormant. Treants and similar intelligent plant creatures within the forest might even consider it a godlike being. The spellwarped template indicates that it probably lives near some sinkhole of magic, such as a nexus, or any similar concentration of magical energy in your campaign world.

Spellwarped Woodling Tarrasque CR 24

Neutral Evil Colossal aberration (augmented magical beast)

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +25, Spot +25; darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent

AC 44, touch 5, flat-footed 41; Dodge

hp 944 (48 HD); DR 15/epic and 5/slashing, regeneration 40, Toughness (6)

Immune ability damage, critical hits, disease, energy drain, fire, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning

Resist SR 59

Fort +40, **Ref** +30, **Will** +20

Weakness vulnerability to fire

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee bite +59 (4d8+19/18-20/x3) or
bite +59 (4d8+19/18-20/x3) and

2 horns +54 melee (1d10+9) and

2 claws +54 melee (1d12+9) and

tail slap +54 melee (3d8+9)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Base Atk +48; **Grp** +83

Atk Options augmented critical, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Enlarge Breath, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Multigrab, Power Attack

Special Actions frightful presence, improved grab, rush, swallow whole

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 48th):

3/day -- *speak with plants*

1/day -- *animate plants, command plants, control plants, entangle, summon nature's ally II, summon nature's ally IV, summon nature's ally VI, summon nature's ally VIII, summon nature's ally IX*

Abilities Str 49, Dex 18, Con 39, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 14

SQ carapace, plant traits, spell absorption

Feats Alertness, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness (6)

Skills Hide -12, Jump +13, Listen +25, Search +11, Spot +25, Survival +14

Augmented Critical (Ex): The spellwarped woodling tarrasque's bite threatens a critical hit on a natural attack roll of 18-20 and deals triple damage on a successful critical hit.

Carapace (Ex): The spellwarped woodling tarrasque's armorlike carapace is so tough and reflective that it can deflect all rays, lines, cones, and even *magic missile* spells. Any such effect has a 30% chance of reflecting back at the caster; otherwise, it is merely negated. Check for reflection before rolling to overcome the creature's spell resistance.

Frightful Presence (Su): The spellwarped woodling tarrasque can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Each affected creature must succeed on a DC 36 Will save or become shaken, and that condition lasts as long as it remains within 60 feet of the tarrasque. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the spellwarped woodling tarrasque must hit a Huge or smaller opponent with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Plant Traits: The spellwarped woodling tarrasque is immune to paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, and stunning. It is not subject to critical hits or mind-affecting effects. The creature has low-light vision.

Regeneration (Ex): No form of attack deals lethal damage to the spellwarped woodling tarrasque. It regenerates even if it fails a saving throw against a *disintegrate* spell or a death effect. If the tarrasque fails its save against a spell or effect that would kill it instantly (such as those mentioned above), the spell or effect instead deals nonlethal damage equal to the creature's full normal hit points +10 (or 954 hp). The spellwarped woodling tarrasque is immune to effects that produce incurable or bleeding wounds, such as mummy rot, a sword with the wounding special ability, or a clay golem's cursed wound ability. The spellwarped woodling tarrasque can be slain only by raising its nonlethal damage total to its full normal hit points +10 (or 954 hit points) and using a *wish* or *miracle* spell to keep it dead.

If the spellwarped woodling tarrasque loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1d6 minutes. (The

detached piece dies and decays normally.) The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Rush (Ex): Once per minute, the spellwarped woodling tarrasque can move at a speed of 150 feet.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The spellwarped woodling tarrasque can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Huge or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the tarrasque, the opponent takes 2d8+8 points of crushing damage plus 2d8+6 points of acid damage per round from the creature's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 50 points of damage to the tarrasque's digestive tract (AC 25). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The spellwarped woodling tarrasque's gullet can hold 2 Huge, 8 Large, 32 Medium, 128 Small, or 512 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Skills: The spellwarped woodling tarrasque has a +8 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

Next month, we'll take a look at golem variants and see what you can do when you stretch the rules a bit -- all in the name of fun for your players, of course. Y'all come back now, hear?

Additional Feats

The following feats are from books other than the *Player's Handbook* and the *Monster Manual*.

Enlarge Breath (from *Draconomicon*): The length of your breath weapon increases by 50% (rounded down to the nearest multiple of 5). For example, an old silver dragon breathing an enlarged cone of cold produces a 75-foot cone instead of a 50-foot cone. Cone-shaped breath weapons get wider when they get longer, but line-shaped breath weapons do not. When you use this feat, add +1 to the number of rounds you must wait before using your breath weapon again.

Multigrab (from *Savage Species*): When grappling an opponent with the part of your body that made the attack, you take only a -10 penalty on grapple checks made to maintain the hold.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the **RPGA** Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the *Living Greyhawk* and *Living Force* campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing. He also models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno, and spends as much time as possible with his wife and many pets. He expects to enlarge his family by one before the end of the year.

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